



# House of Representatives

General Assembly

**File No. 133**

January Session, 2017

Substitute House Bill No. 7112

*House of Representatives, March 22, 2017*

The Committee on Children reported through REP. URBAN of the 43rd Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

## ***AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTERS.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Section 17a-106a of the general statutes is repealed and  
2 the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2018*):

3 (a) For purposes of this section, "children's advocacy center" means  
4 an entity that provides a child-focused, trauma-informed, facility-  
5 based program that fosters collaboration between professionals in the  
6 fields of law enforcement, child protection, mental health, forensic  
7 interviewing, medicine and victim advocacy in interviewing or  
8 meeting with children and children's parents, guardians or other  
9 caregivers, in order to make decisions regarding the investigation and  
10 prosecution of allegations of child abuse or neglect or trafficking, as  
11 defined in section 46a-170, of children and the safety, treatment and  
12 provision of services to alleged victims of child abuse or neglect or  
13 trafficking of children.

14 [(a)] (b) The Commissioner of Children and Families, as department

15 head of the lead agency, and the appropriate state's attorney may  
16 establish multidisciplinary teams for the [purpose] purposes of (1)  
17 reviewing particular cases or particular types of cases, [or to  
18 coordinate the prevention, intervention and treatment] (2)  
19 coordinating the intervention in and prevention of child abuse or  
20 neglect or trafficking of children and the treatment of abused,  
21 neglected or trafficked children in each judicial district, [or to review]  
22 (3) reviewing selected cases of child abuse or neglect or [cases  
23 involving the trafficking, as defined in section 46a-170, of minor  
24 children. The purpose of such multidisciplinary teams is to advance  
25 and coordinate] trafficking of children, (4) advancing and coordinating  
26 the prompt investigation of suspected cases of child abuse or neglect [,  
27 to reduce] or trafficking of children, (5) reducing the trauma [of any  
28 child victim] experienced by alleged victims of such abuse or neglect  
29 or trafficking and, [to ensure] (6) ensuring the [protection and]  
30 treatment of [the child] abused, neglected or trafficked children and  
31 the protection of such children and their families. The head of the local  
32 law enforcement agency or [his or her] such head's designee may  
33 request the assistance of the Division of State Police within the  
34 Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection [for] in order  
35 to accomplish such purposes.

36 [(b)] (c) Each multidisciplinary team shall consist of at least one  
37 representative of each of the following: (1) The state's attorney of the  
38 judicial district of the multidisciplinary team, or such state's attorney's  
39 designee; (2) the Commissioner of Children and Families, or the  
40 commissioner's designee; (3) the [head] heads of the local or state law  
41 enforcement agencies, or [his or her designee] such heads' designees;  
42 (4) a health care professional with substantial experience in the  
43 diagnosis and treatment of abused or neglected children, who shall be  
44 designated by the multidisciplinary team members; (5) a member,  
45 where appropriate, of a youth service bureau; (6) a mental health  
46 professional with substantial experience in the treatment of abused or  
47 neglected children, who shall be designated by the multidisciplinary  
48 team members; [and] (7) a forensic interviewer, who shall be  
49 designated by the multidisciplinary team members; (8) a victim

50 advocate, who shall be designated by the multidisciplinary team  
51 members; and (9) any other appropriate individual with expertise in  
52 the welfare of children that the members of the multidisciplinary team  
53 deem necessary. Each multidisciplinary team shall select a chairperson.  
54 [A] Each multidisciplinary team may invite experts to participate in  
55 the review of any case and may invite any other individual with  
56 particular information germane to the case to participate in such  
57 review, provided the expert or individual shall have the same  
58 [protection] protections and obligations under subsections [(f) and (g)]  
59 (h) to (j), inclusive, of this section as members of the multidisciplinary  
60 team.

61 [(c)] (d) The Governor's task force for justice for abused children,  
62 through the subcommittee comprised of individuals with expertise in  
63 the investigation of child abuse and neglect, shall: (1) Establish and  
64 modify standards to be observed by multidisciplinary teams; (2)  
65 review protocols of the multidisciplinary teams; and (3) monitor and  
66 evaluate multidisciplinary teams and make recommendations for  
67 modifications to the system of multidisciplinary teams.

68 (e) Children's advocacy centers may assist multidisciplinary teams  
69 in the investigation of allegations of child abuse or neglect or  
70 trafficking of children by (1) providing safe, child and family-friendly  
71 settings that maintain the privacy of children and their families; (2)  
72 establishing policies and procedures that are culturally competent; (3)  
73 aiding such multidisciplinary teams in ensuring that the support and  
74 services provided by such multidisciplinary teams meet accreditation  
75 standards set forth in the Standards for Accredited Members  
76 established by the National Children's Alliance; (4) aiding in the  
77 development of written protocols for an interdisciplinary and  
78 coordinated approach to such investigations; (5) providing forensic  
79 interviews of children that (A) are conducted by a trained forensic  
80 interviewer, (B) are recorded in a digital format, (C) solicit information  
81 in an unbiased, fact-finding manner that is culturally sensitive and  
82 appropriate for each child's developmental stage, (D) support accurate  
83 and fair decision-making by such multidisciplinary teams, and (E) may

84 be observed by members of the multidisciplinary teams involved in  
85 such investigations whenever possible; (6) providing specialized  
86 medical evaluation and treatment, mental health services and support  
87 and advocacy services to children at such centers or through  
88 coordination with and referral to other appropriate providers of such  
89 services; (7) providing regular case review for the purpose of aiding in  
90 decision-making, problem solving, systems coordination and  
91 information sharing concerning the status of cases and the services  
92 required by children and their families; (8) providing a comprehensive  
93 tracking system for monitoring the progress and outcomes of cases;  
94 and (9) participating in annual evaluations of the multidisciplinary  
95 teams' effectiveness and operations, which may be submitted in the  
96 form of a report to the Department of Children and Families, the  
97 Governor's task force on justice for abused children, the Connecticut  
98 Children's Alliance, Inc. and the National Children's Alliance.

99 (f) The Connecticut Children's Alliance, Inc. may (1) coordinate and  
100 facilitate the exchange of information among children's advocacy  
101 centers; (2) provide technical assistance to municipalities in order to  
102 support the establishment, growth and accreditation of children's  
103 advocacy centers; (3) educate the public and the General Assembly on  
104 the needs of victims of child abuse or neglect or trafficking of children;  
105 (4) provide or coordinate multidisciplinary training opportunities that  
106 support a comprehensive response to allegations of child abuse or  
107 neglect or trafficking of children; (5) conduct annual evaluations of  
108 children's advocacy centers and such centers' associated  
109 multidisciplinary teams; and (6) submit a report annually to the  
110 Governor's task force on justice for abused children and the General  
111 Assembly concerning outcomes from each children's advocacy center.

112 [(d)] (g) All criminal investigative work of [the] multidisciplinary  
113 teams shall be undertaken by members of [the team] such  
114 multidisciplinary teams who are law enforcement officers and all child  
115 protection investigative work of [the] such multidisciplinary teams  
116 shall be undertaken by members of [the team] such multidisciplinary  
117 teams who represent the Department of Children and Families,

118 provided such representatives [of the department] may coordinate [all]  
119 investigative work with such multidisciplinary teams and rely upon  
120 information generated by [the team] such multidisciplinary teams in  
121 the course of such department's investigations. The protocols,  
122 procedures and standards of [the] such multidisciplinary teams shall  
123 not supersede the protocols, procedures and standards of the agencies  
124 who are [on the multidisciplinary team] represented by members of  
125 such multidisciplinary teams.

126 [(e)] (h) Each multidisciplinary team shall have access to and may  
127 copy any record, transcript, document, photograph or other data  
128 pertaining to an alleged child victim within the possession of the  
129 Department of Children and Families, any public or private medical  
130 facility or any public or private health professional provided, in the  
131 case of confidential information, the coordinator of the  
132 multidisciplinary team, or such coordinator's designee, [identifies]  
133 shall identify the record in writing and [certifies] certify, under oath,  
134 that the record sought is necessary to investigate child abuse or neglect  
135 and that the multidisciplinary team will maintain the record as  
136 confidential. No person who provides access to or copies of [such] a  
137 record upon delivery of certification under this section shall be liable  
138 to any third party for such action. [The] No multidisciplinary team  
139 shall [not] be deemed [to be] a public agency [under] as defined in  
140 section 1-200, for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act.

141 [(f)] (i) No person shall disclose information obtained from a  
142 meeting of [the] a multidisciplinary team without the consent of the  
143 participant of the meeting who provided such information unless  
144 disclosure is ordered by a court of competent jurisdiction or is  
145 necessary to comply with the provisions of the Constitution of the state  
146 of Connecticut.

147 [(g)] (j) Each multidisciplinary team shall maintain records of  
148 meetings that include, but are not limited to, the name of the alleged  
149 victim and perpetrator, the names of the members of the  
150 multidisciplinary team and [their] such members' positions, the

151 decision or recommendation of the multidisciplinary team and  
152 information regarding support services provided. In any proceeding to  
153 gain access to such records or testimony concerning matters discussed  
154 at [a meeting] such meetings, the privileges from disclosure applicable  
155 to the information provided by each of the participants at [the] such  
156 meeting shall apply to all participants.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2018</i>	17a-106a

**KID**      *Joint Favorable Subst.*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

---

***OFA Fiscal Note******State Impact:*** None***Municipal Impact:*** None***Explanation***

The bill, which defines children's advocacy centers and adds members to be included in multidisciplinary teams, does not result in a fiscal impact to the Department of Children and Families (DCF). DCF currently supports 16 children's advocacy centers at an average, annual cost of \$50,958 each. Multidisciplinary team members participate on a voluntary basis.

***The Out Years******State Impact:*** None***Municipal Impact:*** None

**OLR Bill Analysis****sHB 7112*****AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTERS.*****SUMMARY**

This bill defines a children's advocacy center for purposes of assisting multidisciplinary teams that investigate alleged child abuse, neglect, or trafficking. Under the bill, such a center is an entity that provides a child-focused, trauma-informed, facility-based program that fosters collaboration between professionals in law enforcement, child protection, mental health, forensic interviewing, medicine, and victim advocacy to interview and meet with children and their parents, guardians, or other caregivers to make decisions regarding (1) investigating and prosecuting alleged child abuse, neglect, or trafficking and (2) the safety, treatment and provision of services to the alleged victims of these crimes.

Current law permits the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the appropriate state's attorney to establish multidisciplinary teams for various purposes related to child abuse, neglect, and trafficking. The bill specifies that one purpose for such teams is to provide protection to abused, neglected, or trafficked children and their families, rather than just to such children as under current law.

The bill adds to the individuals who must be included in a multidisciplinary team a forensic interviewer and child advocate, both of whom must be designated by the team members. It also (1) permits children's advocacy centers to assist, in various capacities, multidisciplinary teams that are investigating alleged child abuse, neglect, or trafficking and (2) specifies certain activities the Connecticut Children's Alliance (a statewide coalition of child

advocacy centers and multidisciplinary teams) may take.

The bill also makes several technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2018

### **CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTERS**

Under the bill, children's advocacy centers may assist multidisciplinary teams in investigating alleged child abuse, neglect, or trafficking by:

1. providing safe, private, child and family-friendly settings;
2. establishing culturally competent policies and procedures;
3. helping the teams ensure that the support and services they provide meet the National Children's Alliance's Standards for Accredited Members (this alliance is a national association and accrediting body for children's advocacy centers);
4. helping to develop written protocols for an interdisciplinary and coordinated approach to such investigations;
5. providing specialized medical evaluation and treatment, mental health services and support, and advocacy services to children at children's advocacy centers or through coordination with and referral to other appropriate providers;
6. providing regular case review to aid in decision-making, problem solving, systems coordination, and information sharing concerning the status of cases and services children and their families require;
7. providing a comprehensive tracking system for monitoring case progress and outcomes; and
8. participating in annual evaluations of the teams' effectiveness and operations, which may be submitted as a report to DCF, the governor's task force on justice for abused children, the

Connecticut Children's Alliance, Inc. and the National Children's Alliance.

The bill also permits the advocacy centers to assist the teams by providing forensic interviews of children that:

1. are conducted by a trained forensic interviewer and digitally recorded;
2. solicit information in an unbiased, fact-finding manner that is culturally sensitive and appropriate for each child's developmental stage;
3. support the teams' accurate and fair decision-making; and
4. may be observed by team members involved in child abuse, neglect, or trafficking investigations whenever possible.

#### **CONNECTICUT CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE**

The bill allows the Connecticut Children's Alliance, Inc. to:

1. coordinate and facilitate the exchange of information among children's advocacy centers;
2. provide technical assistance to municipalities to support the establishment, growth, and accreditation of these centers;
3. educate the public and General Assembly on child abuse, neglect, and trafficking victims;
4. provide or coordinate multidisciplinary training opportunities that support a comprehensive response to alleged child abuse, neglect, or trafficking;
5. conduct annual evaluations of children's advocacy centers and their associated multidisciplinary teams; and
6. submit a report annually to the governor's task force on justice for abused children and the General Assembly on each center's outcomes.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Committee on Children

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 12 Nay 0 (03/07/2017)